

FRIENDS OF THANDOLWETHU

Annual Report 2019



FRIENDS OF THANDOLWETHU

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON



'In a desperate world, children are a unifying force capable of bringing us all together in support of a common ethic'

Graca Machel

Founded in September 2018, the Friends of Thandolwethu Association has had two financial reports drafted and approved. This is our very first narrative annual report which gives an account of the activities carried out between September 2018 and February 2020.

The conviction that has sustained us is that the experiences that children make in their early years are crucial to the development of their language, thinking, social

and emotional skills.

Richer experiences in that phase become solid foundations for brain development and for academic performance at a later stage.

The goal of the Friends of Thandolwethu is to bring into being the idea of a Reggio Emilia inspired Early Childhood Development Centre in Samora Machel, Cape Town: the Thandolwethu ECD. The project was initiated by three residents

of the area, whom the association is assisting by making resources available to: support their professional development and entrepreneurial training, research and explore different educational activities, promote and disseminate innovative educational practices inspired by the Reggio Emilia pedagogic approach, and to build the space that will host the centre.

Our team in Samora Machel wants to design and offer an enquiry-based programme that helps children to develop their potential in a safe, healthy and creative setting. To sustain the initiative requires the team to develop skills of social entrepreneurship so that the centre is able to generate income for themselves and for others in their community.

We are building this project from the ground up, thanks to a practice of solidarity that sees individuals from different backgrounds, different communities and different countries coming together to tackle two issues at once: education and livelihood.

BOARD MEMBERS 2019

Annalisa Contrafatto
(Chair)

Catherine Collingwood
(Deputy Chair)

Sara Dalla Motta
(Secretary, Treasurer)

Andrea Couvert

Manuela Donatone

Alessandra Leporati

Andrea Martini

Luigi Pavini

Alessia Toia

DEVELOPING THE PRACTICE

Central to our practice has been staying close to the Samora Machel initiators of the ECD project, Mzi Ndzuzo, Nokubonga “Sbosh” Mepeni and Wendy Konco. In our association there are people from different countries and language groups. Through associating together around the ECD impulse we learn with and from each other.

Mzi, Sbosh and Wendy’s idea for a Reggio Emilia inspired ECD has provided all of us who came together to form the association with an opportunity to cross the barriers raised by the segregated history of Cape Town.

‘The children of any nation are its future. A country, a movement, a person that does not value its youth and children does not deserve its future’

OR Tambo

A large part of our focus in this period has been on paying attention to the educational spirit and practice that will infuse our physical structure when it is established. We all share an interest in the enquiry based, respectful early learning approach of the municipal toddler and infant centres of Reggio Emilia which sees its children as strong, competent, curious citizens.



To this end we have supported the professional development of the initiators by raising funds for their participation in some of the activities organised by the Africa Reggio Emilia Alliance (AREA). In 2018, they took part in the AREA supported Mini-Conference in March in Cape Town and the AREA Conference in June in Johannesburg. The team also enrolled in the series of AREA workshops, "Introduction to the principles of the Reggio Emilia approach", the first of which was held in February 2020. The workshops have been placed on hold due to Covid-19. Since 2019, Mzi, Sbosh and Wendy have been members of the AREA network.

THE 'REGGIO EMILIA' APPROACH

Started by parents in Reggio Emilia, Italy, after World War II, the Reggio Emilia approach emphasises respect, responsibility and community involvement and values the child as curious, capable and resilient. Children are allowed to explore and discover in a supportive and rich environment, where the curriculum is created around their interests by providing a wide variety of educational opportunities that encourage the children's natural ability for creativity, self-expression, communication, logical thinking, and problem-solving.





We organized three public sessions of practice development in 2019, two of which involved children in Samora Machel.

The first one was a seminar on “What is a Reggio Emilia and Decolonizing inspired approach to Early Learning and how appropriate is it in the context of Cape Town?”. The aim of the seminar was to raise the profile of the project by connecting with others inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach. Hosted by iThemba School on the outskirts of the informal settlement of Vrygrond, the seminar was attended by 50 participants from various educational initiatives and institutions from across Cape Town. There the Friends of Thandolwethu had the opportunity to facilitate a learning opportunity for the broader community of Reggio Emilia inspired practitioners and build interest in the project amongst

the Early Learning education community in Cape Town.

The second was a workshop on ‘Decolonizing Education’ held in Samora Machel with input from early learning specialist researcher Dr Fikile Nxumalo and special needs teacher Joanne Peers. At the workshop the volunteers from Samora Machel prepared provocations out of recycled material for the children to encounter and made available art equipment for the children to express themselves. This was an opportunity for the volunteers who already work with children in after-care and holiday clubs in Samora Machel to be exposed to the Reggio Emilia inspired value that ‘the environment is the third teacher’ and that if we as adults are thoughtful about what materials we make available to children without imposing what they should do with them, they will engage creatively and

confidently and show us what they are interested in. For the workshop, the Association collected recycled materials and contributed art equipment. The Samora volunteers arranged the materials in eye catching ways and facilitated the children's engagement when necessary.

The third was the Design Thinking workshop 'Kids as Seeds of Change', a collaboration between the Association and the Paco Design Collaborative (Milan) where children decided to explore the issue of alcohol abuse within their community and designed and built cardboard models to illustrate their solutions. The workshop was extremely successful, involving some of the volunteers who had participated in the previous initiative with Dr Fikile Nxumalo. Input from the children was subsequently shared within the community of Samora Machel. This initiative was part of Open Design Afrika Festival.

In addition to the collective opportunities for learning, the Association is supporting Wendy Konco in pursuing a Bachelor Degree in Education (Foundation Phase Teaching). We paid in full her university fees for the first year, which she successfully completed in 2019, and paid the first part of the 2020 fees. Wendy applied for financial aid through her University both in 2019 and in 2020. In 2019, her application was rejected for procedural reasons, and the outcome of her 2020 application is currently pending.

Friends of Thandolwethu is also assisting Wendy by means of a small monthly contribution to cover the cost of travel to and from the University and to partially cover the cost of study materials. At the beginning of 2020 we made available to Wendy a laptop computer, which proved to be not only useful for preparation of assignments, but absolutely essential for her studies when academic institutions moved to remote teaching due to the Covid-19 emergency in South Africa.



DATE	PLACE	INITIATIVE	TITLE	PARTICIPANTS
18 May 2019	iThemba School, Vrygrond	Seminar	What is a Reggio Emilia and Decolonizing inspired approach to Early Learning and how appropriate is it in the context of Cape Town?	1 co-ordinator 3 speakers 2 artists 43 adult participants
19 May 2019	Samora Machel	Workshop	Decolonizing Education	1 co-ordinator 2 speakers 2 artist trainers 25 adult participants 40 children
26 October 2019	Samora Machel	Design Thinking Workshop	Kids as Seeds of Change	2 trainers 7 facilitators 20 children

A PROJECT FOR THE PHYSICAL SPACE

A number of options for the ECD site have been explored in the past year.

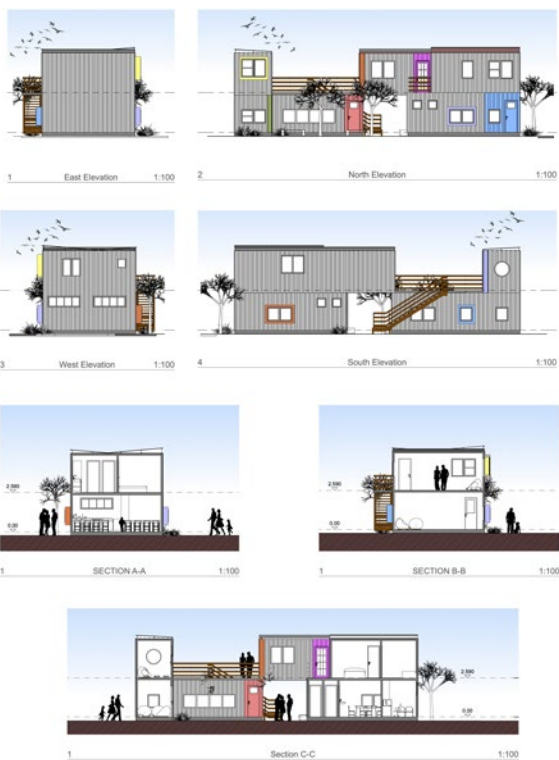
Our approach to the search for a physical space for the school was twofold: on one side, we explored the possibility of renting or acquiring an existing venue owned by the Western Cape Province, City of Cape Town, or by local non-profit organisations; on the other, since one of the initiators of the project is willing to make a plot of land available, we worked with ACG Architects to develop a concept for a structure to be erected on such a plot.

We listened in to co-initiator Wendy Konco saying, 'We don't want it big, we want there to be a small ratio between teachers and children and we want it on site - where the children live'. Therefore the initiators have decided that the site should be

within the community and close to the homes of the children who will attend.

None of the options involving existing venues proved to be suitable, either because they are too far from the identified area or because they are not available in a reasonable time-frame. Consequently we have focussed on the initial design proposal produced by the architects for the site within the community.

To move forward we will be addressing three key issues: drafting an agreement for the use of the land that is equitable and fair to all the parties involved; deciding if the design proposal should be developed as a temporary structure or as a permanent structure in brick and mortar; raising the necessary funds to proceed.



First Architect's sketch for the ECD building using containers

DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS OF SOLIDARITY

Friends of Thandolwethu has been very fortunate to receive the patronage of the City of Reggio Emilia, Italy. They have inspired and encouraged us from the very beginning in many ways including supporting the initiators of the project as well as our representatives to visit the International Loris Malaguzzi Centre which is home to the ongoing development of the Reggio Emilia approach and facilitating our connection with the Africa Reggio Emilia Alliance (AREA) in South Africa.

We have received much encouragement from the Consul of Italy in Cape Town, Emanuele Pollio and from the Consular officers who have publicized our activities, connected us with potential partners and invited us to present our project to the Italian Community on the occasion of the visit to Cape Town of Ambassador of Italy in South Africa, Paolo Cuculi, in June 2019. Consul Pollio has given the opening addresses to two of our events in 2019.

Friends of Thandolwethu also received the support of the Committee of the Italians Abroad (COMITES) of Cape Town, who kindly gave us the opportunity to present our project during the traditional Christmas concert of the Italian community.

In September 2019, to celebrate the first anniversary of the Association, we organised a special solidarity lunch hosted by Chef Lapo Magni. The magical atmosphere of the location and the incredible six-course ethical menu created the perfect environment to engage and consolidate our relations with some of our donors and stakeholders.

In the last year we also conducted three walkabouts in Samora Machel; these have been great opportunities for supporters to get to know the people involved in the project and to become more familiar with the context in which the ECD will be operating.



COMMUNICATION

In May 2019 Iqhaya Radio (IQFM), a community radio from Samora Machel, hosted a phone-in debate on, “What is a Reggio Emilia and Decolonizing inspired approach to Early Learning and how appropriate is it in the context of Cape Town?”. The broadcast introduced the workshop that we subsequently had on the same theme and contributed to inform its content. This was a wonderful opportunity to spread the word about the project within the community as well as to hear views from Samora Machel residents on the subject. Dr Fikile Nxumalo, Joanne Peers and Catherine Collingwood were the discussants.

Local newspapers La Gazzetta del Sudafrica and the Southern Suburbs Tatler reported about the activities of Friends of Thandolwethu Association. Four articles were published, which can be found on our website in the section, “In the press”.



In December 2019 we released the first issue of our newsletter. Aimed at our members, donors and stakeholders and distributed electronically, the publication is now accessible upon request through the website.

Our website in English and Italian is our main communication outlet. By the end of February 2020 it had had over 32,000 unique visitors.

www.friendsofthandolwethu.org

Our Facebook page, which has been slowly building its audience, now has a total reach of 2,560 individuals.

[@friendsofthandolwethu](https://www.facebook.com/friendsofthandolwethu)

FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES

As you read in 'Developing the practice', in May we organised a seminar and a workshop. These two events, that were made possible by the generous support of the speakers, were planned so that one could support the other. Donations collected from participants to the seminar made it possible to offer the workshop to practitioners in the community of Samora Machel at no cost.

When planning our fundraising events we have asked ourselves: how can events organised by the Association be opportunities for connecting across communities, between people previously separated by Apartheid, for learning together about respectful, participatory learning between adult and child, for

celebrating life together? Our solidarity fundraising lunch at Lapo's Kitchen at Josephine Mill in Newlands was one such opportunity. Apart from enjoying delicious fusion cuisine inspired by owner-chef Lapo's Italian roots and love for South Africa, guests took time to converse amongst themselves in response to the question: 'What is quality education?' A number of guests expressed interest in becoming actively involved in the project.

Although the main goal that we had set for ourselves was to provide information about the ECD project, the Christmas concert of the Italian community offered as well the opportunity to accept donations.

In addition to fund raising events, the fundraising website Back-a-Buddy has been a successful mechanism for those in Italy and elsewhere who wish to contribute financial support for the project. So far we have raised R 32,136 from the twenty one donations that

have been made through this platform.

We also subscribed to Snapscan, an efficient mobile payment solution that allows donors in South Africa to give using an app installed on their mobile device.



FINANCES & GRATITUDE

2019 BREAKDOWN OF INCOME	
Membership fees	12,350
Donations	103,003
Fundraising Events	26,006

2019 BREAKDOWN OF EXPENSES	
Studies and Training	65,702
Communication	6,975
Fundraising Events	12,726

Surplus	45,967
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Since September 2018, we raised R170,922 for our project.

One person donated R95,876 – that is amazing! 126 people donated a total of R75,046. That is equally amazing!

One big donation means more money goes to the project and we reach our goal faster. Multiple people making smaller donations means more eyes and hearts on our project! Needless to say, we need both.

We are grateful to everyone who has walked with us since our inception, in Sep 2018.

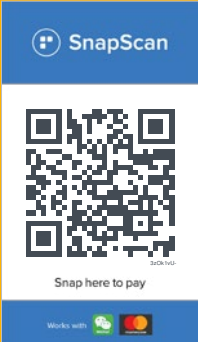
In particular we would like to thank all the individuals, in South Africa and overseas, who have provided financial and practical support. There are so many people than we could possibly mention here. You know who you are, and to all of you goes our gratitude. We could not do this without you!

ANNOUNCEMENT

Friends of
Thandolwethu
NPO has
Section 18A
status, which
makes donations
tax deductible.



SPONSORS



LOOKING AHEAD

Our plans for 2020 have been impacted by the Covid-19 situation. President Cyril Ramaphosa declared a national state of disaster and issued a lockdown until the end of April. From May onwards the lockdown will move to different stages corresponding to different levels of restrictions which may continue for an indefinite period of time, until the pandemic will be under control.

Wendy Konco is continuing with her studies. University courses suspended at first, then resumed on-line. Distance learning while in lockdown with two young children is not an easy task, yet Wendy stays committed, makes use of the laptop that the Association made available and connects it to the internet using her mobile phone as hotspot.

While in lockdown, Friends of Thandolwethu took part in the worldwide initiative 'Special Night of Tales' promoted by the Municipality of Reggio Emilia and the International Loris Malaguzzi Centre. They read, in

the isiXhosa language, the story of Ufufu (Federico) by Leo Lionni. The Samora Team continued to engage with their practice during



this period by offering to children of the Samora Machel area clay to play with, and by observing their interaction with the medium and their artistic expression.



COVID-19 EMERGENCY SUPPORT

The current restrictions on movement and economic activities put in place to save lives and limit the diffusion of Coronavirus, hit the poor and unemployed especially hard. In South Africa, millions of individuals rely on the informal sector for their income; for them, no work translates into no food in a matter of few days.

To mitigate the effect of the crisis deriving from the current suspension of most economic

activities, our team in Samora Machel, in collaboration with local association Ubuntubethu, initiated a Community Action Network (CAN) group - a self-organised support system which is part of the wider CAN network of Cape Town. They set up hand washing facilities, run a soup kitchen, check in with vulnerable members of the community to ensure that they are well and disseminate Covid-19 related information.

We invite our friends and supporters to make a donation to support relief and prevention activities. Friends of Thandolwethu has set up a special Covid-19 Solidarity Fund to assist the team in this effort.

Bank details stay the same but this fund is kept completely separate from the Association regular funds. Only donations specifically intended for this

purpose will be used for the CAN group. If you plan to support the Samora team's Covid-19 relief efforts please ensure you indicate it in your deposit reference, so that your donation can be correctly allocated. Any amount raised will buy food items for the soup kitchen, soap, sanitiser, cleaning products as well as airtime and data so that the volunteers can stay connected.



HOW TO BE INVOLVED

Friends of Thandolwethu has two categories of members:

Active members are those individuals who attend meetings, contribute to the decision-making process, and have an active role in the life of the Association.

Supporting members are those individuals who share the Association's vision and want to support the organisation without being involved in its everyday life.

In addition to our donors, sponsors, members and volunteers, the Association relies on a network of **Ambassadors** who are persons living abroad who act as the face and voice of our project in the communities where they live and work.



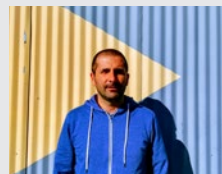
Manuela Donatone,
Velletri, Italy



Christelle Elson,
Dresden, Germany



Alberto Iotti,
Sant'Ilario d'Enza, Italy



Andrea Martini,
The Hague, Netherlands



Alessia Toia,
Turin, Italy

We invite you to help the Association Friends of Thandolwethu NPO in setting up the Thandolwethu Early Childhood Development Centre in Samora Machel township, on the outskirts of Cape Town. Once operational, the centre will be managed and run by members of the local community, creating jobs in an area where unemployment is particularly high. The funds will be used to support training of the staff, building the centre, ensuring quality educational activities, and promoting and disseminating innovative educational practices inspired by the Reggio Emilia pedagogic approach.

ABSA BANK,
Branch no: 632005
Account no: 40 9517 4488
SWIFT code: ABSAZAJJ

Snapscan:
(QR code inside, pag. 18)

Friends of Thandolwethu
NPO Number 215-957

✉ contact@friendsofthandolwethu.org

f [@friendsofthandolwethu](https://www.facebook.com/friendsofthandolwethu)

🌐 friendsofthandolwethu.org

With the patronage of the City of Reggio Emilia

